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RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC  
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHDC  
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STATE FOR AF/W, INR/AA  
DOE FOR GEORGE PERSON

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TAGS: [MOPS](#) [PGOV](#) [GV](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: NIGERIA: MILITARY OFFICIAL ON POLITICS, YAR'ADUA'S  
HEALTH, ECOWAS

REF: A. ABUJA 183

[1](#)B. ABUJA 962

[1](#)C. CONAKRY 224 ET AL

[1](#)D. TD-314/042365-08

Classified By: Acting Political Counselor Heather Merritt for reasons 1  
.4. (b & d).

[1](#)1. (C) On May 29, 2008, Poloff spoke to Air Vice Marshal Christian Marizu (protect), Director of Policy and Planning for the Office of the Chief of Defense Staff, about his perception of the military's views on Nigerian politics and regional affairs. According to Marizu, the likelihood of military intervention in Nigerian politics in the near- to mid-term is very low. Citing extensive professionalization and re-education efforts in recent years, Marizu dismissed recent press accounts which claimed that dissatisfaction brewing in certain military circles about perceptions of high level corruption, poor living conditions, and the deaths of forty-six soldiers returning from Darfur in a road accident could result in a coup. However, he assessed that there is a slight possibility of military reaction (Note: In Post's opinion this is more likely to be a restoration of order in the face of public unrest rather than a coup. End note.) in politics should a worst-case scenario develop in which President Yar'Adua suddenly dies or is incapacitated, as Vice-President Goodluck Jonathan is widely believed to be too incompetent to be an effective president. But he hastily added that, given the military's overall satisfaction with the President's handling of a crisis over back pay (reftel A), and a general approval of the direction the nation appears to be heading, this is indeed a remote possibility. Marizu also predicted that, due to political expediency, Yar'Adua's election would be affirmed by the Supreme Court's July or August decision.

[1](#)2. (C) Marizu made an off-the-cuff statement while discussing Yar'Adua's recent emergency medical treatment in Germany (reftel B) that the President's health condition might be more serious than the government publicly admits. Marizu explained that he has attended more than one meeting during which the President had to suddenly leave, ostensibly for reasons of poor health.

[1](#)3. (C) Regarding recent unrest, including a military mutiny, in Guinea (reftel C), Marizu mentioned that ECOWAS was planning some sort of offer of assistance to Guinea which would include dialogue on possible next steps, with Nigeria

playing a lead role. He declined, however, to elaborate further, as to the exact nature of such an offer, or even if Guinea had requested ECOWAS' help. (Note: Post has since confirmed with ECOWAS sources that an assessment mission to Conkary, led by former Nigerian president Ibrahim Babangida, is indeed planned in the near future. End note.)

¶4. (S//NF) COMMENT: Marizu reports directly to Chief of Defense Staff Owoye Azazi, and is well-positioned to speak on the abovementioned subjects. Although military morale has been recently shaken by the deaths of the soldiers and squabbles about back pay, and both Defense Minister Yayale Ahmed and House of Representatives Defense Committee Chair Oluwole Oke have publicly commented on their worries about insubordination in the ranks resulting from anger over the abovementioned problems, Post agrees with Marizu's assessment that at present a military coup is not a likely scenario (also see reftel D).  
SANDERS